

THE 12TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT REPORT



Volume 5, Issue 4

PROUDLY REPRESENTING SAN FRANCISCO AND SAN MATEO COUNTIES

May 2006

YEE INTRODUCES NATION'S FIRST BILL TO PROTECT FREE SPEECH FOR COLLEGE NEWSPAPERS



AB 2581 WILL PROHIBIT CENSORSHIP OF CALIFORNIA'S COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY NEWSPAPERS

Speaker pro Tem Yee recently announced the nation's first piece of legislation to protect the freedom of speech and press for college and university newspapers.

"College journalists deserve the same protections as any other journalist," said Yee. "Having true freedom of the press is essential on college campuses and it is a fundamental part of a young journalists training for real world reporting. Allowing a

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ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES VOTE TO PRESERVE LAURA'S LAW

KARNETTE AND YEE AUTHOR AB 2357 TO PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS

Assemblymember Betty Karnette and Speaker pro Tem Yee are teaming up to preserve Laura's Law, the statute that allows counties to enforce Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) orders for some potentially dangerous mentally ill patients.

Without the Yee-Karnette bill, which has been approved by the Assembly Health and Judiciary Committees, Laura's Law would expire on January 1, 2008.

Specifically, AB 2357 will preserve Laura's Law to assure that court-ordered help reaches people who are not complying with voluntary treatment programs, have a history of hospitalization, arrest or violent behavior and are potentially dangerous to themselves or others.

"Laura's Law was the most significant reform of California's treatment statutes in the past three decades," said Yee. "Laura's Law has proven to result in less hospitalization, less homelessness, fewer arrests, less incarceration, increased collaboration between the mental health and justice systems, as well as a more efficient and effective cross-agency delivery system."

"I supported Laura's Law when it was first introduced in the Legislature and I am honored to carry the measure to keep it on the books," said Karnette. "I think it is important to ensure that mentally ill offenders and patients don't fall through the cracks of our public safety system or our mental health system."

The current law is named for Laura Wilcox, a 19-year old high school valedictorian, who was killed in 2001 by a man who was suffering from serious delusional paranoia. Her father, Nick Wilcox, will testify in support of AB 2357 at the Health Committee hearing.

"Laura's mother and I believe that if the court order and treatment envisioned under Laura's Law had been available to her killer's family, she might still be alive today," said Wilcox. "As a society we have a duty to provide treatment in the least

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CLICK TO READ... **The SKYLINE VIEW**

school administration to censor is contrary to the democratic process and the ability of a student newspaper to serve as the watchdog and bring sunshine to the actions of school administrators.”

A recent U.S. Seventh Circuit Court decision ruled that a college administrator could require student editors of a state university’s newspaper to submit articles for prior review before the newspaper would be sent to the printer for publication.

The case known as *Hosty v. Carter* involved two editors and a reporter at the *Innovator*, a student newspaper at Governor’s State University in Illinois. The newspaper published a series of articles critical of the school’s administration, including one about the decision not to renew the contract of the *Innovator*’s advisor. Subsequently, the dean of student affairs instituted a requirement that the newspaper had to submit articles to the administration for approval prior to publication.

The District Court first ruled that the students’ First Amendment rights were violated, but the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals reverse the lower court decision and recently the US Supreme Court declined to hear the students’ appeal. Prior to this decision, it was assumed in California that student publications had the same First Amendment protections as professional publications.

In fact, the Seventh District decision spurred Christine Helwick, General Counsel for the California State University system, to send a memo to presidents at each CSU campus that read, “The [Hosty] case appears to signal that CSU campuses may have more latitude than previously believed to censor the content of subsidized student newspapers.”

Ironically, a state law written in 1992 provided censorship protection for high school publications. Yee’s legislation, AB 2581, would ensure such free speech protections for college publications, specifically prohibiting censorship of student newspapers at any UC, CSU, or community college.

“AB 2581 is essential in order for student newspapers in California to have the free speech protections they deserve,” said Jim Ewert, Legal Counsel for the California Newspaper Publishers Association. “Although we will continue to push for the Supreme Court to validate the rights of college newspapers, in California we are taking the proactive steps to make sure similar censorship does not occur at our colleges and universities.”

AB 2581 will be considered in May by the Assembly Judiciary and Higher Education Committees.

[**CLICK TO HEAR LELAND YEE ON AB 2581**](#)

CLICK TO READ... ❖

The Golden Gate [X]PRESS

HEALTH COMMITTEE APPROVES BILL TO ASSIST INCARCERATED YOUTH SPEAKER PRO TEM AUTHORS LEGISLATION TO HELP END JUVENILE RECIDIVISM AND HOMELESSNESS

The Assembly Health Committee recently approved legislation authored by Speaker pro Tem Yee that is expected to cut down on recidivism and homelessness of formerly incarcerated youth. AB 2004 will prohibit the Department of Health Services (DHS) from requiring incarcerated juveniles upon release to reapply for Medi-Cal, the State and federal program that provides comprehensive health benefits to individuals such as children from low-income families. Instead, the department will be required to reinstate such benefits within 72 hours of a minor’s release from a youth correctional facility.

Currently when a minor who is eligible for Medi-Cal is held in a correctional facility such as a juvenile hall, camp, ranch, or California Youth Authority, they are immediately terminated from Medi-Cal. While in the juvenile justice system, the burden to provide such health services is partially shared by the county. Under AB 2004, Medi-Cal benefits will only be temporarily suspended and not terminated, which will allow youth who are release to immediately receive Medi-Cal and therefore uninterrupted health coverage.

“It is imperative that we find ways to help reduce the recidivism rate and homelessness of formerly incarcerated youth,” said Yee. “AB 2004 will make a major difference by closing the unreasonable gap in health benefits for released juveniles and will also save significant revenue for counties.”

Often the paperwork necessary to reapply for Medi-Cal is not completed, leaving many individuals without health benefits, or in some cases, even kept in juvenile hall instead of a transitional home. In fact, in 2002 there was an average of 855 post-disposition youth in juvenile hall awaiting placement in a group home or other setting, leaving a significant financial burden on counties.

“Terminating enrollment during incarceration unfairly prevents juveniles from obtaining placement in foster care and group homes,” said Randall Hagar, California Psychiatric Association Director of Government Affairs. “AB 2004 is the humane and medically necessary policy to get these youth the mental health services they so desperately need.”

A brief issued by the 2005 National Health Policy Forum indicates that 70 percent of children in juvenile justice facilities have a mental health disorder and approximately 20 percent have a serious mental illness. There are over 114,500 children in state custody through the juvenile justice or child welfare systems in California.

“The reality is that without adequate healthcare, many of these youth will again resort to criminal activity or be left homeless,” said Yee. “It is important to establish a continuum of care and ongoing support to reduce the demand for costly and unnecessary services later.”

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YEE, NÚÑEZ CALL ON CONGRESS TO STOP DIVISIVE LEGISLATION, ALLOW PATH TO CITIZENSHIP FOR IMMIGRANTS

Speaker Fabian Núñez and Speaker pro Tem Yee recently introduced Assembly Joint Resolution (AJR) 51, which calls on Congress to stop pushing divisive immigration legislation such as HR 4437 and work to pass comprehensive reforms that allow for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

The resolution, which passed on a partisan vote in the Assembly Judiciary Committee, urges the President and Congress to reject all immigration reform efforts that: criminalize individuals because of their immigration status; view immigration policy as a border-only security issue; and fail to recognize our common humanity and the values of our nation.

The resolution also calls on the President and Congress to “take a comprehensive, bipartisan, and well-reasoned approach to solving our broken immigration system” and “to stand up against extremists’ voices who wish to enact reform that does not solve our immigration crisis but only serves to divide us.”

“We can’t afford to bury our head in the sand any longer,” said Yee. “It’s time to recognize the value of immigrant workers and allow for a path to legalization and citizenship. Rather than pushing divisive legislation, our representatives in Washington should be working to find new ways to make the American Dream a reality for all of those who pursue it.”

“We are now finally coming to a point where the Governor and the President are both recognizing it is time to provide a path to legalization for the millions and millions of undocumented, hard-working immigrants of this state,” said Núñez. “It is a very, very positive sign. My hope is that when the Senate reconvenes next week that they will hurry up and approve a bill that brings respect to these workers and ultimately, that the House of Representative sits down in a conference report to hash out a comprehensive immigration bill.”

“HR 4437 is not only divisive, it is un-American,” said Yee. “I have talked to so many children, parents, and elders who are absolutely terrified that their families may be torn apart. AJR 51 will officially declare California’s opposition to any such anti-immigrant, anti-worker, anti-family federal legislation. We should not use any state resources to enforce such discriminatory laws that only serve to divide us as a community and split up families.”

[CLICK TO HEAR LELAND YEE ON AJR 51](#)



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restrictive setting before people harm themselves or others. Laura’s Law needs a chance to prove its value.”

Before Laura’s Law, the only alternative for noncompliant patients who were suicidal or potentially homicidal was to arrest or hospitalize them. That approach was inefficient, ineffective and dangerous.

Los Angeles County has provided the best example of how to incorporate Laura’s Law. The County’s limited pilot program has produced treatment and budgetary improvements. Using savings generated by the transfers, the county was also able to establish a program in which mental health teams closely followed a small number of seriously mentally ill people after their discharge from jail.

[CLICK TO WATCH LELAND YEE DISCUSS
LAURA’S LAW AT NEWS CONFERENCE](#)



YEE EARNS 100% VOTING RECORD FOR WORKING FAMILIES

**CALIFORNIA LABOR FEDERATION, AFL-CIO AND BUILDING
& CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL GIVES YEE PERFECT
MARKS ON COPE SCORECARD**

For his commitment to working families, Speaker pro Tem Yee earned a perfect voting record of 100% on the Legislative Scorecard from the Committee on Political Education (COPE) sponsored by California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO and the State Building & Construction Trades Council.

“I am proud to stand with the labor community and working families,” said Yee. “The Legislature passed many significant pro-worker bills in 2005, but unfortunately the Governor denied many of these gains by vetoing 16 labor bills and attacking workers through an unnecessary special election. The public spoke loud and clear in the Special Election; the Governor needs to join us in standing up for working families.”

Speaker pro Tem Yee voted in support of workers on all 7 bills that came before him in Committees and all 28 bills that reached the Assembly floor. The legislation included bills to increase the minimum wage, assist seniors to access prescription drugs, track the offshoring of California jobs, stabilize workers’ compensation costs, and increase access to healthcare, among others.



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CLICK TO HEAR LELAND YEE ON THE WRC





April 19, 2006

San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Wednesday

Lawmaker offers bill protecting free speech of college newspapers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO - A state assemblyman on Tuesday introduced a bill intended to protect the First Amendment rights of college journalists in light of a federal court ruling last year that allowed administrators at Midwest universities to review articles before publication.

Assemblyman Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, said students at California State University, the University of California and community colleges should be given the same protections as professional journalists.



"Having true freedom of the press is essential on college campuses, and it is a fundamental part of a young journalist's training for real world reporting," Yee said. "Allowing a school administration to censor is contrary to the democratic process and the ability of a student newspaper to serve as a watchdog and bring sunshine to the actions of school administrators."

The 7th U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled last July that Governors State University, a public university near Chicago, had a right to reasonably regulate its student-run newspaper because it was published under the auspices of the college.

Although the decision was limited to Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana, Yee and free speech advocates fear the ruling could eventually extend to California's state-funded colleges.

Last June, Christine Helwick, general counsel for the CSU, sent a memo to the heads of each campus suggesting they may "have more latitude than previously believed to censor the content of subsidized student newspapers."

Legislators in 1992 passed a bill shielding high school students from censorship, but college newspapers have not been addressed, Yee said.



April 18, 2006

San Mateo County Times

Tuesday

Assemblyman authors a bill to protect student newspapers

College administrators would be prevented from censoring content

BY T.S. MILLS-FARAUDO, Staff Writer

Assemblyman Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, is expected to introduce a bill today that would protect free speech for student newspapers at community colleges and universities across the state.

Yee, who represents Daly City, Colma, Broadmoor and San Francisco, plans to use Skyline College as a backdrop for introducing the bill. He has scheduled a news conference at the college with representatives from the California Newspaper Publishers Association, the Skyline journalism department and student newspaper and the Journalism Association of Community Colleges.



Student journalists in the San Mateo County Community College District applauded Yee's efforts to prevent administrators from censoring what goes into campus newspapers.

Carina Woudenberg, editor-in-chief of the Skyline View newspaper, said their administration has been supportive of the campus paper's free-speech rights. Nonetheless, school newspapers, she said, still need something that will protect them from censorship.

"We're not here to just be good PR (public relations) for the college," Woudenberg said. "We need to be able to let the community know what's going on."

Yee's bill follows a federal decision out of

Illinois that ruled a college administrator could require student editors of a state university's newspaper to submit articles for review before they are published.

"If you have an administrator reviewing information in a student newspaper, it sends a dangerous message to our democracy," Yee said. "One might argue that this is not a regular newspaper, it's a college newspaper. But it's in these colleges where we truly help our students understand what democracy is all about." Furthermore, Yee's spokesman, Adam Keigwin, said the general counsel for the California State University system recently sent a memo to university presidents saying the Illinois case may give them more latitude to censor student newspapers.

"In California, we're saying student newspapers

do deserve First Amendment rights," Keigwin said.

CSU spokeswoman Clara Potes-Fellow said this memo was confidential and should not have been released to the public. She also said CSU officials were not prepared to comment on Yee's bill, because they had not yet read it.

Community college district spokeswoman Barbara Christensen said Yee's bill likely would have no impact on Skyline and College of San Mateo's student newspapers.

"We do not subject our newspapers to prior review. We try to replicate what a real-world newsroom would be like," she said. "The students run the newspaper and write what they choose, and after it's published, an adviser goes over it with them."